

REMARKS

Claims 9, 13 and 14 stand rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Yoshida in view of Fukuda. Claims 10-12 stand rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Yoshida in view of Fukuda and Hirota. Claims 15 and 17-19 stand rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Yoshida in view of Fukuda and Hirota and well-known art. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 9 has been amended to claim an image processing apparatus comprising “a plurality of input apparatuses, each input apparatus having a different level of ease of use” and “a controller that determines an automatic-clear time for the input apparatus on which the input operation was performed based on the level of ease of use associated with the input apparatus.” As explained in paragraph [0072] of the application, an image processing apparatus such as a copy machine may have a plurality of input apparatuses such as a keyboard and a joystick. The joystick may be used for disabled users who may not be able to operate the keyboard effectively. Accordingly, the keyboard is associated with a conventional ease of use level. The joystick is set to a different ease of use level that provides the disabled user additional time to enter information using the joystick. The prior art does not disclose or suggest assigning each input device a different level of ease of use as claimed. Further, the prior art does not disclose or suggest “a controller that determines an automatic-clear time for the input apparatus on which the input operation was performed based on the level of ease of use associated with the input apparatus.”

On page 2, of the pending Action the Examiner states:

In reply, Examiner asserts that Fukuda teaches an image processing apparatus (copy machine, see paragraph 1) that receives inputs through a plurality of input apparatuses (touch panel, key input means 2-5 of LCD display, ten key 2, start key, clear key, etc. see paragraphs 15-16, 22) respectively having different levels of ease of use (see abstract, paragraphs 7-10, 21, 23, 26-34, note that various tabs related to different operating modes are displayed on the display user can set these displayed operating modes via above mentioned plurality of input apparatuses. As one nonlimiting example, copy number of sheet which is set by ten key 2 is considered

easy, therefore, the operating mode is set to low difficulty, see above mentioned paragraphs for more examples & details. *Thus, each setting operating mode is associated with an input apparatus and its difficulty level (level of ease of use) is based on the difficulty level of using or inputting things via the plurality of above mentioned input apparatuses.*

As acknowledged by the Examiner, in Fukuda the various tabs on the display screen relate to different modes. The Examiner is associating these different modes with the claimed different levels of ease of use. In Fukuda, however, each of the ease of use levels is associated with the mode, not the input apparatus as now claimed. For example, an easy operating mode may be set using different input apparatuses such as a touch panel, or keyboard in Fukuda. Accordingly, in Fukuda the same operating mode will be set to the same level of difficulty regardless of which input apparatus is used to select the mode. In comparison, in the claimed invention each input device is assigned a different level of ease of use. Accordingly, the same function may be selected using different input apparatuses. However, the ease of use level assigned when a keyboard is used would be different than when the same function was selected using a joystick.

As explained above, Fukuda does not disclose or suggest assigning each input device a different level of ease of use as claimed. Further, the Fukuda does not disclose or suggest “a controller that determines an automatic-clear time for the input apparatus on which the input operation was performed based on the level of ease of use associated with the input apparatus.” Further, Yoshida and Hirota also fail to disclose these features and are not cited by the Examiner as disclosing these features. Since the prior art fails to disclose or suggest all of the claimed features of claim 9, the rejection of claim 9 should be withdrawn. The rejections of claims 10-19, which depend from claim 9 should be withdrawn for at least the same reasons.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicants petition for any required relief including extensions of time and authorize the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection

with the filing of this document to **Deposit Account No. 03-1952** referencing docket no.

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Respectfully submitted,

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